

Minutes of COA Board Meeting- November 18, 2020

Board Member Present: Carol Airasian, Esther Keaney, Mary Keenan, Tom Lewis, Araxie Poladian and Arlene Smith

Staff Members Present: Anne-Marie Gagnon, Director; Marina Kirsanova, Program Coordinator; Rae Grassia, Principal Account Clerk; Margie Wayne, Program Services Assistant

Absent: Pat Gold, Dorothy-Jean Brown and Janet McCullough

Anne-Marie called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM

Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting, October 14, 2020

The Board reviewed the Minutes. Tom Lewis made a motion to approve. Esther Keaney seconded. Approved.

Discussion of formation of Program Advisory Group

Marina addressed the formation of a Program Advisory Group to support programming efforts on the Zoom platform. After 9 months of COVID-19 we have succeeded with getting many people on ZOOM. Marina asked if a group of volunteers would like to continue discussing program options via Zoom. This group would be a Program Advisory Group. Araxie pointed out that quite a few people do not participate because they do not have access to ZOOM. Anne-Marie would like to work on how to get more access to people. Carol Airasian volunteered and made a motion to form this Ad-Hoc committee. Arlene Smith seconded. Motion passed. Anne-Marie thanked the Board. Tom Lewis suggested the Carol take the role of Board liaison to the Program Advisory Group. We received a suggestion from Arlene getting people with pets to do a virtual presentation which we will try to do in January.

Review of Outreach and Communication Efforts

Anne-Marie updated the Board on outreach. We have continued to publish the monthly newsletter which Marina is the lead person who designs and books all programs. We publish 2500 newsletters each month for distribution to residents and some locations including housing and the food pantry. Margie reported the Library receives it, Watertown Savings Bank locations, Francis Market, The Gables, the Residence and other groups. 1500 are mailed, with others packaged to groups. We have 600 people on Notify Me through the Town website. We send a monthly newsletter blast as well as a weekly blast with a snap shot of the upcoming week. We have a Facebook page with information with one for COA and one for Food Pantry. We continued with our Birthday Card program that Margie works on with a group of volunteers. Close to 90 cards go out a month. Margie is working on a holiday card program now. We are trying to get more programs on cable access tv. Arlene Smith is worried about the winter months and people suffering from depression and isolation. Arlene suggested a possible pen pal program with something that would go out to people who don't have a partner or are not getting out. We need to reach out to people and bring joy. Tom Lewis also agrees people are isolated and may fall through the cracks not participating in the Zoom world. Marina informed the group that we do have a volunteer who reaches out on the phone to talk and read to people every week. This has been in effect for at least the past 4 months. Marina suggested this could be something the Program Advisory Group could work on expanding. Araxie calls and sends notes to her own neighbors and it has been beneficial to their spirits. Anne-Marie agreed that this is something we have done and will continue. We all need to reach out.

Update on Senior Shuttle Bus Operations

Margie updated the Board on bus usage noting that the bus has continued to take residents food shopping. 8 to 12 residents ride each week. A letter was sent out as a reminding that the shuttle is available. Another letter was sent out asking participants where they would like to go holiday shopping. Based on requests we are setting up 2 trips with 2 runs each to Target/Watertown Mall, Market Basket/Marshalls in Waltham, Russo's and Ocean State and a trip to Trader Joe's. Riders need to make a reservation. Anne-Marie reminded the group that the bus is running within COVID-19 restricted

guidelines with 4 riders per trip and disinfecting. The numbers are low but we are here if people need us. Tom Lewis wondered if there was a need for us to be getting updated information on health recommendations and guidelines out to people. Anne-Marie feels the information is out there and people understand, and that is why our numbers are low, but she will reach out to the Health Department for more information to distribute. Araxie mentioned the 3 bag limit which Margie did explain that has been in place pre COVID-19. We are trying to keep contact down.

Member Items

- Tom Lewis asked if there is a way to get a simplified version of rules for COVID-19 on our website or in our newsletter. Anne-Marie and Marina will work with the Health Department. Arlene agreed we need something simple and to the point, keeping yourself an important part of the family and keeping yourself safe.
- Tom also asked if there was a way to include the subject of discrimination in our programming with outreach to the community for a more diverse participation including the Board. We are an untapped resource for our community. Tom wanted to acknowledge the Board for all their hard work and dedication. Many of the Board members have spent a great number of hours and years supporting this Board.
- Marina has scheduled 2 webinars on December 8th and December 23rd with Discovery Centers for Civic Engagement which encourages people over 55 to engage in their community and play a more active role in the civil society. We are starting this conversation. Marina thanked Tom for the idea which came from his weekly conversation group.
- Resident Helen Dempsey thanked Marina for working on the Program Advisory Group.
- Resident Sharon Schumack, a member of Watertown for All Ages, agreed that the work of the Program Advisory Group will be great. Watertown for all Ages is interested in increasing awareness of the great programs at the Center.

Adjourn

Tom Lewis made a motion to adjourn and Carol Airasian seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM

Respectfully submitted

Rae Grassia, Principal Account Clerk